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FRANK FRAZETTA FANTASY ILLUSTRATED



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Frank Frazetta

A Letter From The Publishers

So you made it past the cover...that's a start! The Death Dealer evokes such powerful emotions...it's one of those pieces that captures your attention and defies definition...Is it the art itself or the sense of power and evil that pervades the painting? No matter how you may perceive it one thing is for certain, it is undoubtedly a stunning achievement of imagination! In this issue Dr David Wiesniewski provides some excellent background concerning this classic piece and also provides an informative in-depth examination of Frazer's pen and ink techniques! Featured for the first time are Magic the Gathering card artist Doran Bader, U.K. multimedia artist Steve Stone and French American comic artist Philip Xavier. Also featured is a haunting BFGood tale from Wendy Hall, the construction of Elio Leate's outrageous saga Inferno Terra and a preview of Anne McCaffrey's upcoming novel Nemesis Ship, scheduled to be released in January.

We are changing to a bi-monthly publishing schedule in 1999, starting with the next issue on sale in January. Issue #5 kicks off the new year with original artwork and stories from Avalon Studios' Brian Haberlin and White Portada, Doran Bader, The Hidebrand Brothers, Elio Leate/John Grindberg, Elio Leate/Horley & Oriso, and Rob Frier. Plenty of new talent was discovered at convention stops in Orlando, Charlotte, Chicago, San Diego and Atlanta and you'll see it represented in future issues. Thanks to Joe Juko, pictured below, for signing autographs and drawing sketches for appreciative fans in both Charlotte and San Diego. We'll see the conclusion of Joe's lightning Hellbenders wrapped up in a special twenty page segment in our May issue.

Keep reading!



FRANK FRAZETTA FANTASY ILLUSTRATED

Winter 1998 • Volume 1, Number 4

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"Death Dealer"

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FRANK FRAZETTA'S "Death Dealer"

Many artists spend their lives trying to create a single image that will guarantee them a small place in art history. Most will fail. Frazetta is the exception. Artists seek perfection; Frazetta achieves it. Over the past 50 years Frazetta has drawn and painted a long line of powerful, memorable, and influential images. The *Death Dealer* is one of his greatest masterpieces - a haunting, disturbing scene that is like a dark dream materializing before our eyes.

The *Death Dealer* has a smoldering malevolent presence. His large horse, almost tree-like, is rooted in the earth. The two figures seem to rise out of the earth to remind us of our mortality. Death is the ever-present backdrop to our lives and violence is the defining feature of the twentieth century. Frazetta has mastered the visual vocabulary of death, destruction, and barbarism; he holds up a brutal mirror to our dark places.

As always, Frazetta adds subtle details that heighten the intensity of the composition. For example, the *Death Dealer's* bull-like helmet has that leral quality which adds a suggestive note of animal savagery. The *Death Dealer's* axe seems an essential part of his nature, another level of visual threat and intimidation. The swirling birds of prey are drawn to the background carnage and further reinforce the raw realities of the landscape.

The origin of this artwork is interesting. It is the result of extreme anger and frustration felt by Frazetta. In 1973 Frazetta began to hear comments that he was washed-up, coasting on his reputation, submitting half-finished works to art editors too intimidated to reject anything. Fans asked why Frazetta couldn't paint oils equal in power to his Conan paintings of the 1960's. Frazetta's fanatical fans refused to accept anything except a total masterpiece each time he sat at the easel. These lacerating opinions disappointed Frazetta...and angered him. His rage served to fire his competitive nature. The result was the *Death Dealer* - a static equestrian portrait (similar to the standing Conan the Adventurer in concept) but its blazing presence and volcanic intensity stamp it as pure Frazetta. Frazetta has captured the strange stillness of abject horror.

The *Death Dealer* vibrates with the echoes of past masters, from the horsemen of the apocalypse, the *Pale Rider* of Munch, the *Nightmare* of Fuseli, the satanic scenarios of H. Bosch, to the Black oils and *Caprichos* of Goya. This oil resonates with many ancient associations - death on a horse, the executioner, or faceless death wielding a scythe. Part of the *Death Dealer's* unique impact is its indeterminacy: it challenges the viewer to ask questions. Is the *Death Dealer* an allegory on war? Is he a righteous executioner, a symbol of social justice? Or does the painting portray social chaos and total anarchy, an avenging demon fresh from hell? Perhaps it's a thinly veiled self-portrait of Frazetta's own soul.

The painting was completed over the course of 5 days. The initial idea was quickly sketched - in over the course of one day; the intricate metalwork and subtle overlay tining took more time. Frazetta is the consummate perfectionist; he demands pure excellence. That is what defines a genuine masterpiece - it cannot be better; it sets a standard of achievement, a perfectly expressed idea. The *Death Dealer* has a timeless appeal that transcends every demographic boundary; it is beloved by rock stars, tattoo artists, blues, intellectuals, Hollywood celebrities, and fine artists the world over.

It takes a great deal of energy to produce a work of this impact. Frazetta has told me many times how difficult it is to work himself up to this level of passion. Frazetta puts himself into the paint. The result is that he becomes tired, used, diminished, emotionally and physically exhausted. It's not unlike a world-class athlete who gives everything he has to achieve a lofty goal. Frazetta has attained those lofty goals time and again.

Dr. David Wislewicz



PRESENT DAY, PRESENT TIME
AMERICA HAS LOST ONE OF
ITS MOST PRECIOUS CITIES

ALRIGHT,
PROFESSOR.

THE EVENTS OF
THIS MORNING HAVE
CAPTURED MY
ATTENTION.

I'M FAMILIAR
WITH YOUR AMPLIFICATION,
BUT GENERAL CHASS WASN'T
PRESENT AT THE PREVIOUS
BRIEFING.

SO I
SUGGEST YOU
GIVE US YOUR BEST
SUMMATION.

I'VE BEEN
TOLD WHAT YOU
THINK THIS IS PROFESSOR
EINSTEIN, BUT I CAN'T
BELIEVE THIS WAS
NOT A NATURAL
OCCURRENCE.

LAKE SPERDING
THROUGH THE CENTER
OF SAN FRANCISCO IS
NOT A NATURAL OCCURRENCE
TO ANY RATIONAL SCIENTIST
WHO UNDERSTANDS THE
FUNDAMENTALS OF
PLATE TECTONICS.

THIS WAS
A PLANNED ATTACK
BY AN UNKNOWN
ENTITY...

A SOCIETY
NOT YET
REVEALED.

A RACE OF
PEOPLE NOT YET
DISCOVERED.

INFERNUS TERRA

WRITTEN BY ELIO LEONE
PAINTED BY DANNY ORIZO
ASSISTS BY ALEX HORLEY

PART 1

LET US HOPE
THAT THIS ATTACK
WAS ONLY DESIGNED TO SEND
A MESSAGE AND NOT A
PREFACE TO WAR.

...AND I
WAY WORLD IN
THE LITERAL
SENSE.

DESTRUCTION

"SAN FRANCISCO WAS
DELIBERATELY THIS MORNING
IN A MATTER OF MINUTES."

"MOLTEN LAVA GREW
THROUGH THE CENTER OF THE
CITY IN A DEADLY RAPIDITY
DESTROYING EVERY STRUCTURE
IN ITS WAKE AND KILLING ANY
LIVING ORGANISM CAUGHT
IN ITS PATH."

"WE HAD BEEN TRACKING
UNUSUAL SEISMIC ACTIVITY
UNDERNEATH VARIOUS MAJOR
INTERNATIONAL CITIES FOR THE
PAST TWO YEARS."

"I BELIEVE THIS TERRIBLE UNNATURAL
OCCURRENCE CAN HAPPEN TO ANY
AND ALL OF THE OTHER CITIES UNLESS
SOMETHING IS DONE IMMEDIATELY."

-ORIZO SAVED- 97B







MY FELLOW
AMERICANS

A TERRIBLE
TRAGEDY HAS OCCURRED
TODAY A TRAGEDY UNLIKE ANY
WE HAVE EVER
KNOWN

SOMETHING THE
AVERAGE PERSON, MYSELF
INCLUDED, DID NOT UNDERSTAND
UNTIL JUST A FEW
MOMENTS AGO.

LUCKY FOR US
THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO
DO UNDERSTAND THE EVENTS
OF THIS MORNING AND ONE OF
THEM IS HERE WITH
US TODAY

I'D
LIKE TO
INTRODUCE
PROFESSOR
SILVERSTEIN



SILVERSTEIN

SILVERSTEIN



THIS IS
LIVE NEWS
LIVE FROM THE
WHITE HOUSE

PROFESSOR
SILVERSTEIN IS
ABOUT TO
SPEAK

THESE SILVER-ARMED
MEN COULD BE THE KEY
TO THE SALVATION OF
MY PEOPLE



EVERYONE...
PLEASE LISTEN
TO WHAT I HAVE
TO SAY VERY
CAREFULLY

IF YOU THINK
SAN FRANCISCO
IS AN ISOLATED
INCIDENT...

THANK
AGAIN

I HAVE
CONCLUDED THAT
THIS SO-CALLED
SEIZURE WAS AN
AGGRESSIVE ACTION
TAKEN AGAINST US
WITH MANY MORE
TO FOLLOW...
OUR WORLD IS IN
IMMENSE DANGER.

Walter Miller Miller
© 1987 Miller



IF THEY
DO NOT WANT
TO HELP
ME...

...I
WILL MAKE
THEM.







YOUR
WEAPONS ARE
POTENT...
BUT NOT
ENOUGH TO
KILL ME!



YOU ARE
LUCKY THIS DAY
IS BORN!



NEAT
TIME YOU
DIE!



WHAT THE
HELL WAS
THAT?

GET
RAGNAR...
ALL OF
YOU NOW!

I DON'T
GET INTO
FOR THIS AND
WHAT?



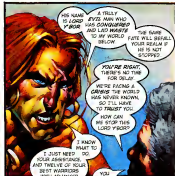
SO WHAT'S
ALL THE BUCKING
ABOUT?

HOW
ARE
YOU?

I AM
BROKE. I HAVE
COME TO SEEK
YOUR HELP...
AND TO WARN
YOU
YOUR WORLD
WILL DIE AND YOU
WILL ALL PERISH! YOU
MUST STOP HIM
IMMEDIATELY!

NOW
JUST HOLD
ON A SECOND
AND EXPLAIN
YOURSELF.
NOW!

HOW
EXACTLY IS
IT THAT WE HAVE
TO STOP?



HIS NAME
IS LORD
Y'BOOR

A TRULY
EVIL MAN WHO
HAS CONQUERED
AND LAD WANTS
TO MY WORLD
BELOW

THE FATE
WILL BEFALL
YOUR REALM IF
HE IS NOT
STOPPED

YOU'RE RIGHT,
THERE'S NO TIME
FOR DELAY

WE'RE FACING A
CRISIS THE WORLD
HAS NEVER KNOWN,
SO I'LL HAVE
TO TRUST YOU
HOW CAN
WE STOP THIS
LORD Y'BOOR?

I KNOW
WHAT TO
DO.

I JUST NEED
YOUR ASSISTANCE,
AND TWELVE OF YOUR
BEST WARRIORS
WITH ADVANCED
WEAPONS.

YOU
GOT IT.



PROFESSOR,
I'D LIKE YOU TO BE
DIRECTLY INVOLVED.
PERHAPS EVEN ACCOMPANY
ECON AND 'OUR FINISER'
ON THEIR MISSION.

I THINK YOUR
SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE
OF THE INNER EARTH WILL
BE USEFUL TO OUR TEAM.

IT WILL BE
DANGEROUS AND YOU
MAY NOT RETURN.

SO I'LL
LEAVE IT UP
TO YOU.

HOW CAN I
REFUSE TO SERVE
MY COUNTRY AND WORLD
AT THE TIME OF ITS
GREATEST NEED.

IT WILL BE
AN HONOR.

I
THINK







ANGERED AND STIMULATED, THE ASSASSIN
FOLLOWS THE TAIL OF THE HORROR.



THE PROSPECT OF A SECOND ENCOUNTER WITH
A WORTHY ADVERSARY QUICKENS HIS PULSE.



BUT FOR NOW, HIS DESIRE
TO KILL MUST BE POSTPONED.



BRINGING THE BAD NEWS TO
HIS LORD TAKES PRECEDENCE.



Click



A TASK THAT WOULD
TERRIFY LESSER MEN.

FRIGHT IS A FOREIGN
EMOTION TO THIS ASSHOLE

THIS TASK IS
SIMPLY A NUISANCE

YOU'VE COME
TO ME WITHOUT
HIS HEAD. HAS OUR
LITTLE REBEL
BLASPHEMED YOU?

YES, MY LORD
I FOLLOWED THE
SCENT OF THIRTEEN MEN
NOT OF OUR WORLD.
I WILL FIND THEIR
LOCATION QUICKLY.

"QUICKLY"
"QUICKLY"
YOU DISOBEY
ME CYRUS.

YES, MY
LORD... AND
HE HAS
RETURNED.

WITH
OTHERS I
ASSUME?

FIND THEM
IMMEDIATELY!
INSTRUCT THEM
TO BRING THEM
TO ME ALIVE.
AND CYRUS...

DO NOT
FAIL ME
AGAIN!

CYRUS FINDS HIS OWN
MOTIVATION AS THE CAMP IS
DISCOVERED SAGITTARY THEREAFTER

WHAT IS
IT CYRUS?

ASSEMBLE
YOUR MEN. SOON
A SLAUGHTER
IS AT HAND.

I HAVE
FOUND THE LAST
REMAINING PATHETIC
REBEL CAMP.

ANOTHER
CAMP
REMAINS...

AND IT
HOUSES
SOME NEW
INNERTANTS.

Y'BOR
WANTS THEM
ALIVE...

I PREFER
THEM DEAD!

DID YOU
HEAR THAT MY
FRIENDS?
READY!

CHARGE!!!!

YEEAAAAARGGGHHH!

STEADY
GENTLEMEN...
LET THEM GET
WITHIN FIGHTING
RANGE.

LET'S SHOW
THESE FREAKS A
LITTLE MODERN
TECHNOLOGY

MODERN WEAPONRY SACCOUNTS PRIMAL
FURY--AND THE BATTLE BEGINS.





CONTINUED
NEXT ISSUE

STRANGE CARGO

STORY: JESSE STONE & KEN HEDGECOCK

ARTWORK: STEVE STONE

PLANET SYRIANNA 0202.
CO-ORDINATES 155165 0 126

HIGHEST SECURITY HEADQUARTERS
OF THE HERRAS CORPORATION.
ALL OTHER DETAILS CLASSIFIED

FLIGHT NUMBER CLASSIFIED
PERSONAL TRANSPORTER TO
GENERAL TOHL REMARKS

ALL OTHER DETAILS CLASSIFIED
RECORD OF THIS FLIGHT ERASED....



FLIGHT NOW
DOCKING IN
DAY 17934.



MY FIGHTERS,
YOU KNOW WHY
YOU ARE HERE.

THE PRECIOUS
CARGO WILL BE
DELIVERED TO THE
GHOST MOON
OF RONG 4.

THE RARRAKEN
PIRATES, WHO WILL
MEET THERE, WILL
DELIVER THE CARGO
TO YOUR HOLD.



THIS SHIPMENT
COULD CHANGE THE
FUTURE OF OUR
STAR SYSTEM
FOREVER.

WE HAVE WITHIN
OUR GRASP THE ABILITY
TO ENSURE THAT OUR
PRECIOUS WAR WILL
NEVER END.

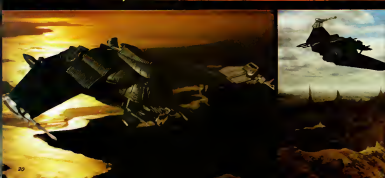
I DID
NOT SAY THIS
I WAS NOT HERE
END BRIEFING...



THE DREAMS
OF YOUR EMPEROR
FLY WITH YOU
MY FIGHTERS.

COURSE HEADING
CONFIRMED.

ROW 4...



LANDING
SECURED...



FIGHTERS WILL
RESEMBLE FOR
GROUND POINT
RENDEZVOUS.







I AM
CAPTAIN DEMITRI
OF THE STARCRUISER
BETHLANA...

THE CARGO
YOU SEEK IS
APPROACHING
YOUR LOCATION IN
THE SMALL POP
SPHERE...

OUR
BARGAIN IS
COMPLETE



CARGO
IS
CLEAR...

ASTRITE
TARGET SEQUENCE
54 X68 06432



OUR
SCANNERS
SHOW YOU
HAVE ARMED
YOUR SHIP...

STAND DOWN!
YOUR FIGHTER IS
NO MATCH FOR A
STAR CRUISER.

STAND DOWN!
OR YOU WILL BE
DESTROYED...

TORPEDOS
LAUNCHED...



TARGET IS
DESTROYED....



CARGO IS
RECOVERED
WITHIN
HOLD 3

ACCESS
IMPERIAL
CODING
ONLY...

FIGHTERS
RETURN TO
SHIP....

COURSE
SET....
0270/024
4664



LOCATION : THE ORION NEBULA.
RENDEZVOUS WITH GENERAL REMARAS.

INCOMING
HAILING
FREQUENCY
RECEIVED.....

CODED TO
PRIVATE COMM CHANNEL.
GENERAL REMARAS
ABOARD UNICORP
FLIGHT

MY FIGHTERS
YOU HAVE DONE
ALL THAT WAS
ASKED OF
YOU...

LOWER YOUR
SHIELDS AND
TRANSPORT THE
CARGO ABOARD
MY SHIP...

FIGHTERS
YOUR MISSION
IS AT AN
END....

YOUR PEOPLE
SALUTE YOU....

NOW
PREPARE
TO DIE AS
HEROES...



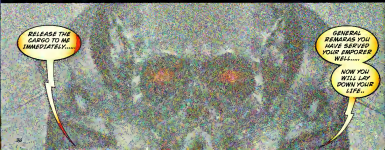
RECEIVING
MESSAGE...
FREQ 15046673160...
STANDBY.

MESSAGE BEARS
THE IMPERIAL COATS...
CLEARING SIGNAL...



MAJESTY,
YOUR SERVANT
REMARKS IS PLEASED
TO REPORT THAT I BEAR
THE PRECIOUS CARGO
YOU HAVE REQUESTED
FOR SO LONG.....

MAJESTY,
I AWAIT YOUR
INSTRUCTIONS.



RELEASE THE
CARGO TO ME
IMMEDIATELY.....

GENERAL
REMARKS YOU
HAVE SERVED
YOUR EMPORER
WELL....

NOW YOU
WILL LAY
DOWN YOUR
LIFE..

MAJESTY
BEFORE
I DIE

MIGHT I KNOW
SOMETHING OF THIS
DEADLY WEAPON THAT
WE HAVE SOUGHT FOR
SO LONG....

THIS IS
NOT A WEAPON
WE COULD EVER
USE...

WE CAN
ONLY HOPE TO
CONTAIN ITS POTENT
FORCE...

THE CARGO WILL
BE BURIED IN OUR
DEEPEST SILENCE AND IT'S
SECRET WILL BE LOST
FOREVER...

IN THE ANCIENT
TONGUE THIS WEAPON
WAS KNOWN AS...

LOVE...

IT IS A
WORD I HAVE
NEVER HEARD BEFORE
MAJESTY...

END

THE POETRY OF LINE

"THE GRAPHIC GENIUS OF FRAZETTA"

By Dr. David Wisniewski

"Art is silent poetry" Simonides/Greek Poet

"The line is the foundation of all art." Bernard Berenson/Art Critic

Unquestionably, the trained reputation and worldwide fame of Frank Frazetta came securely on his magnificent paintings. The great Conan oils and major E.R. Burroughs works exist as the standards of the field, standards that may be approached, but never will be equaled, and certainly are never to be surpassed. Frazetta's paint brush has touched the world. His series of oils opened up newer markets in the fine art world and solidified his standing as the greatest fantasy painter of all time.

However, there exists a small number of sophisticated and highly knowledgeable fans who would maintain that, as great a painter as Frazetta is, his pen/ink work is even better, that his mastery of rendering in pen and brush is complex and unequaled. This point of view seems supported by the never-ceasing demand for Frazetta's pen/ink work; the cognoscenti seek out his originals and cherish them.

What I propose to do in this brief essay is not to cover ground that has already been exhaustively trampled. One may consult the many interviews and articles that analyze Frazetta's art. What I propose is a meditation on the basic spirit of his black and white work; thoughtful personal aspenae and insight rather than exhaustive and comprehensive analysis. My goal is not to praise, but to offer one man's opinion on a very significant body of work. As Picasso said: "Praise needs undemanding if it is to be more than empty mouthing." There is a joy in sharing thoughts with those that can appreciate them.

As with many children Frazetta's exposure to the world of imaginative fantasy started early. Newspaper strips, comics, movies, and the novels of E.R. Burroughs were all present. In its own ineluctable way these influences convinced the young artistic prodigy to pursue a life of fantasy art. Here's the way another author describes this crucial, and mysterious, process:

I do not know just how in childhood we arrive at certain images, images of crucial significance to us. They are like filaments in a solution around which the core of the world crystallizes for us. They are meanings that seem predestined for us ready and waiting at the very entrance of our life...Such images constitute a program, establish our soul's fixed fund of capital. It seems to me that the rest of our life passes in the interpretation of those images, in the attempt to master them with all the weapons we acquire, to draw them through all the range of intellect we have in our possession. These early images mark the boundaries of an artist's creativity. His creativity is a deduction from

assumptions already made...he learns only to understand more and more the secrets entrusted to him at the beginning, and his art is a constant cogito, a commentary on that single secret that was assigned to him. That art will never unravel that secret completely.

Secret of Creativity Bruno Schick

Frazetta's early exposure to Tintin, Segar, Carrell, St. John, and Foster, to name only a few, fired his imagination and planted the visual seeds that would ripen and bear rich fruit over the course of his career. No one escapes their childhood and no artist creates in a vacuum. Frazetta is a product of the artistic traditions that preceded him.

The genius of Frazetta is really first seen in those magnificent funny-animal stories and sketchbook drawings which he copiously produced in the 1940's. Their charm is unmatched; the personalities of each animal are rendered distinctively and convincingly. These are works of originality and finesse. These jewel-like small wonders reveal Frazetta at his lyrical best and represent a facet of his artistic character that would continue right down to the present. Frazetta, had he chosen that route, could have been Walt Disney's greatest artist. It is in these funny animals that we see for sure that art is the natural language of Frazetta's soul; great things are on the horizon.

The talent of Frazetta proved irrepresible; during the next 10 years Frank continued to draw in the comic and strip media: White Indian, Ghost Rider, Thunda, J. Comer, EC, Shining Knight, and many, many others. Each feature was superb in its own way. We must make special note of the White Indian stories and the exuberance that Frazetta injected into the cowboy genre. There are moments of real greatness sprinkled throughout these stories; it represented an important foreshadowing of even greater art to come. Frank would soon be drawing the finest comic story, artistically speaking, ever printed; I refer to the story titled "Unshared Love", an example of pure Frazetta magic.

Frank's command over the pen and brush became more and more absolute; his style crystallized, a style representing an idiosyncratic use of stroke, gesture, and exaggeration. Frazetta found his personal artistic voice and it was quite special.

This artistic period culminated in the series of *Famous Funnies* covers, which Frazetta considers his finest ink works. It is hard to argue with that opinion. These covers





are all virtuoso pieces—very finished, very smooth, perfect in their composition and details. At this stage in his career Fraxetta could draw anything and do it better than anyone else in the world. There was no competition. During this period his lines were flawlessly fluid, musical, flourishing with an exuberance that spilled forth into clear, incisive, and thoroughly memorable visual images. He was able to define and create forms with lines tapered to filigree-like delicacy. The striking compositions are charged with fireworks that make the imagination soar and fly; the ink dances under Fraxetta's supremely confident direction. He is at the height, and he's taken us along.

His line alone seems to be correct, elegant, and pulsing with energy. This is not mere talent, many artists have talent; his is a special gift that transcends technique. Frank invests these designs with more than just fancy rendering, but suffuses them with life, with beauty. It is impossible to conceal the delight that emerges from Fraxetta's pen in these drawings.

Genius is measured by the power of life, by the power of evoking life through the imperfect instrument of art. Jean-Christophe

Fraxetta is a man whose heart is burning with life, whose passions are palpably present, magically present in the point of his pen.

It's often been stated that Fraxetta's cover for *Wizard Science-Fantasy* #29 is probably the finest comic cover ever produced. Fraxetta mentioned to me once that he thought it might be his single finest drawing. I would agree and go further. It is not only Fraxetta's best work but it is the finest illustration of imaginative fantasy ever produced at any time by any artist. The splendor of its conception, the absolute wildness of action that goes beyond mere theatricality, has the effect of tearing its way into our souls and causing joy, delight, and terror. The explosive rhythm of the gestures charge the composition with enchantment. No line is superfluous; any addition or subtraction would destroy its perfect balance. It cannot be improved; artistic intention is completely fulfilled; there is no distinction between initial idea and final result. Quite simply, it is a perfect drawing.

After working with Al Capp for eight years, Fraxetta returned to his own style to pursue a new career. This took place in 1962. He explained that it was difficult to recapture his old style and that this gave his work a different look and feel. Frank doesn't think his work had the same smoothness in that 1962-1965 period. His new drawings were somewhat smaller in scale, with a slightly unfinished texture to the inking. He even watered-down the ink which caused his lines to acquire even more delicacy. The fireworks was as soft as an angel's breath. Many fans consider these drawings to be at least the equal of his *Human Funnies* covers; many others maintain that they are appreciably better. These drawings are, of course, the E.R. Burroughs gestures that Frank

produced for *Conquest Press* during the period 1962-1965. Enlarged versions were published in a portfolio by Carzandoss in the late 1960's.

These drawings are uniformly brilliant. They represent Fraxetta's attempt to get back into the business and make a name for himself. He wanted to show everyone just what he was capable of producing. In convinced that Fraxetta's fierce pride and persistent competitive nature pushed him into a state of blaring inspiration. He wanted to show the world that his work was not old-fashioned and out-of-date, as several art editors claimed while Frank was job-hunting. What Frank did was produce the finest series of pictures ever drawn to illustrate the works of E.R. Burroughs. He easily outdistanced the very best work of Foster, Hogarth, St. John, and Matarra. Frank was back!

Fraxetta's rendering style at this point perfectly matched the subject-matter. This was material Frank was born to draw. The stories of Burroughs are highly visual, with scenes replete with primitive emotions in primitive settings. This is Fraxetta's true meter, depicting the raw realities of life, the noble and the supremely terrible. Time after time in image after image Fraxetta conjures up scenes that interest us, astonish us, move us. These drawings all possess a power and a compelling simplicity. Fraxetta's genius in eliminating unnecessary details is present in all these works. Nothing is overdone; they are textbook models of balance and proportion. Frank is able to explore visually all the facets of deep human emotion and how it artistically manifests itself into attitude and gesture. Frank is here in a passionate love with the human form; he unveils in it all the possibilities for grandeur and noble action. These drawings are filled with a natural grace, a consummate used exaggeration to imbue these scenes with more power, more presence, but he does this without affectation or pretense. The drawings do not contain a false or phony note. The understating violence of many images is redeemed by the elegance of the drawing. During this period, Fraxetta created one small miracle after another.

After 1965, Frank did very little drawing until beginning the series of illustrations for Doubleday in 1970. One very important exception is found in 1967. While visiting the home of long-time Burroughs collector Vern Cornell, Frank executed a pencil drawing of Taron and Belgari, it was given to Vern as a gift. Quite a gift! It's the finest pencil drawing ever produced by Fraxetta. Again, I suspect that Frank's competitive nature came into play in creating this illustration. Frank was surrounded by Burroughs fans, a very select breed, and surrounded by Vern's magnificent collection of original art (St. John, Matarra, etc.). Not to be outdone, Frank showed them what he could do. The result is one of the two best Burroughs drawings Fraxetta ever produced. The original is eye-popping. Fraxetta caught a moment, a moment encompassing life and death, an electric moment heavily pregnant with the implications of future action. Taron is straddling a large limb, symbolizing the





barrier that exists between raw animality and humanity. Tarsan is explosively poised to confront the beast in its own realm, the jungle. I know of few other works that so completely capture the very essence of the ape-man. Belgaire is equally well presented: wild, primal, seething, uncontrolled. His face is savage, noble, terrifying. Tarsan confronts Belgaire; ape-man confronts savage beast. On another level, man is confronting his hidden nature, that part which has been tamed, domesticated, and civilized. Here, it is all on the surface: nothing is hidden. A moment of life and death confrontation against a background of obscure and dreadful mystery. The natural expressive gesture of man and beast is perfectly captured, flawless in execution. The drawing is nothing less than elemental in its scope, a microcosm of the human soul and its contradictions, repugnance, and passion. The picture is not just dynamic, it ROARS with life. It is an unqualified masterpiece, a masterpiece of courage, dignity, and valor against a backdrop of dark death.

Lord of the Savage Jungle is another Burroughs' masterpiece; lavishly executed, gracefully executed, and hypnotic in effect. Fraxetta's brush explodes with emotion, mood, and character. The mysterious wonder of art is that simple lines can affect us, enrich us, and enliven us. Here we are absorbing a quality of Fraxetta's powerful personality. This little jewel presents a magical multi-layered expressiveness that grips the imagination. On a literal level we see a dark dramatic scene where straining and struggling tenses attempt the capture of Tarsan. On a deeper metaphorical level we have an insight into the human condition, and the nature of the hero, who endures, perseveres, and ultimately prevails no matter how impossible the circumstances. Tarsan does not look down; instead, his gaze is raised and deep inner strength is called forth. His straining chest and matted hair give testimony to an almost superhuman physical exertion. A rich resonant light illuminates Tarsan and energizes the composition with a shimmering vitality. This is Fraxetta at his best.

In the 1970's Frank began his series of drawings for Doubleday. He started either weekly (for him) with the *Princess of Mars* drawings but soon began to motivate himself. The work rapidly improved. After this, Fraxetta went on to produce a stunning series of drawings for the *Lord of the Rings* portfolio and *Kabir Khan* folio. The quality is consistently excellent. Once again, the look and feel of these drawings from the 1970's is different than those from the 1950's or 1960's. They contain more brushwork, more areas defined by wash tones. This was caused, no doubt, by the huge amount of painting performed by Frank. Painting was his central concern from 1964-1975; his drawing method was bound to be influenced to some degree. The results are simply wonderful.

After quickly sketching-out the high points in Fraxetta's career as a black and white artist, we now come to the main question, namely, what is it that sets Fraxetta in a class by himself? Why is he the best? Can we characterize his distinctiveness, his particular type of excellence? I think we can.

First off, we can say that one element in understanding Frank's pen/ink magic is that he simply draws so much better than anyone else. However, many artists are quite expert in their technique. Facile virtuosity is often the only qualification needed for financial success. Look around; they are everywhere. Many of the new breed of animal artists can draw birds, elephants, almost any creature, with photographic accuracy, with astonishing technique. But such an accumulation of correctly and accurately reproduced detail leads only to a type of artistic redundancy. This art, ultimately, becomes merely decorative: the form doesn't possess the substantial content of the subject. It might possess a surface liveliness, but it lacks animating force. It is similar to the difference between seeing an animal in a zoo, or in its natural surroundings. The former is unnatural; the sense of life is artificially constrained. That same animal in its natural environment possesses the pulse and disposition of its genuine life. There is no mistaking the difference. Competence and technique might produce excellent craftsmanship, but they are not enough to produce poetry. The art of Fraxetta can never be confused with this type of artistic artificiality. His line lives; his line evokes life no matter what the subject matter. His drawings are powerful in the sense that they impose their atmosphere on our imaginations; we are not just fascinated by his scenes, we are gripped by them. Such is their force, such is the power of his artistic gift, his natural magic.

Thoroughbred horses and thoroughbred styles have plenty of blood in their veins, and it can be seen pulsing everywhere beneath the skin. Life! Life! That is the only thing that counts. All the power of a work of art lies in this capacity. I think that the greatest characteristic of genius is, above all, energy. Fraxetta/Letter July 15, 1983

Fraxetta accomplishes something rather unique. Consider the two traditional approaches to art:

CLASSICAL: art as a means of communication (The artist wants his work to be reasonably comprehensible to the world.)

ROMANTIC: art as the artist's personal statement (Let the world understand it if it can.)

Fraxetta encompasses both views; his art is a highly personal statement that communicates clearly on many levels. Of course, not everyone can appreciate the deeper levels of his art. We all see with varying degrees of depth and understanding.

They speak of having an ear for music; not every eye is fit to taste the subtle joy of painting. The eye of many people are dull as fishes; they see objects literally, of the exquisite they see nothing. Eugene Ionesco/ *Painting and Reality*

Fraxetta is a multi-talented entertainer and a serious artist with a serious statement to make. Let us consider his latest point more closely.





In several interviews (e.g. Cochran's *E.R.B. Library of Illustrations*, vol.5) Frazer's maintains that it is his ability to exaggerate and the believability of his world that set him apart. Frank's genius for exaggeration is, indeed, a rare quality and a key ingredient in his work:

The touch of life and thought comes, then, from an exaggeration here, an exaggeration there, a touch, imperceptible and certain, which is at once his method and his secret.

Arthur Symonds concerning on the sculptor Rodin

If exaggeration is pushed too far, it becomes caricature. Frazer possesses an unfailing knack for knowing when to stop. Again, this is an important element in his art, but it alone does not explain why his art is so compelling, so unique.

Let us turn to the notion of believability. Frazer claims that his early exposure to Hal Foster's *Tarzan* strip was a revelation. He points to the *Tarzan* Single Series #20 comic, which reproduces many Sunday pages, as a profound influence on his approach to art. The revelation Frazer refers to is a revelation of reality, how one artist *sees* the world and translates it into lines on paper. Foster's dynamic compositions, his drawing ability, his unmatched talent for laying-out a page, his emphasis on the human body in motion, and his zealous approach to art all affected Frazer. The early "Egyptian Sequence" of *Tarzan* is a masterpiece and even to one of the two greatest Sunday strip adventure stories ever produced (the other being *Flash Gordon* 1935-1936 by Alex Raymond).

Frank was affected by what he calls the "deceptive simplicity" of Foster's work. It was realistic, yet not heavily illustrated with a profusion of detail as his later *Prince Valiant* would be. The world of Foster's *Tarzan* could actually exist; it touched the imagination in a way we could all feel because we all lived in that same world.

Art is of worth only in proportion as it leads back to life.
Jean-Christophe

Genuine art comes as a challenge to the life of the imagination. How does the mind respond to these created worlds; how firm a grasp does it take in our inner life. Our response to Foster is an entirely different imaginative response than, let us say, our response to the world of *Krazy Kat* or *Little Nemo* or *Sr. John*.

The genius of Frazer is that he went Foster one better. Frazer's world is one of hyper-reality, a world stripped of all its frills and charades, a world of elemental passion and volcanic incident. It is also a world of sublime and dangerous beauty. Any artist's work is profoundly autobiographical; it reveals his vision, his insight, his soul. If an artist is dull, mediocre, or uninspired, then those are the qualities that will emerge in his art. What goes into the art will ultimately be what comes out of the art. With Frazer we are given a privileged pass, a pass to a brightened sense of reality, a place of real heaven and hell - no gray area, no moral

shadings, no artificial bits of constraining civilization in the way. His world lives and breathes erotic passion, a world where passion rules. This is the world that really does exist under the thin veneer of civilization. That veneer is very thin indeed. An angry crowd, a power outage, or being cut-off on an expressway is all that is needed for primitive, savage behavior to emerge - looting, burning, and shooting is soon the result. Yes, this is a world where passion seems to hold sway, but herein is a consciously felt presence, lurking and waiting for its moment.

The word 'erotic' is the one that best defines Frazer's art. Note, however, that I am using it in its original Greek sense of 'Eros', a force that moves the universe, the desire that animates and vacillates reality. This is the underlying passion that pervades everything. A world where passion rules is something we find intolerable, therefore, we conveniently agree not to acknowledge it. The awareness of this truth is too terrible; we avoid it and create a culture to insulate ourselves from it. The danger and mystery of our world is, then, defused and hidden. However, this dangerous, beautiful, erotic world does exist; it is the real magical world we all live in. Somehow we have lost it in our day to day lives. Frazer has recovered the wonder for us, the astonishment of life itself, the mystery, the incredible mystery of it. This is the real style of Frazer, his gift, his personality, his gesture to the world.

What seems to me the highest and the most difficult achievement of art is not to make us laugh or cry, or to raise our hat or our anger, but to do as nature does - that is fill us with wonderment. Flaubert/*Somerset Education*

It is in this poetic sense that I consider Frazer's work to be poetic. He evokes the primitive, the dangerous, and he begins us with beauty. He expands the realm of our inner life and, consequently, enhances life for us. His art is disquieting, yet ultimately satisfying.

Faery is the momentary possession of all the soul desires.
Madame deScal

Frazer's work will always stand apart and will never be confused with whatever fashionable artistic imbecilities that hold the attention (momentarily) of the mass market. Frazer is the best.

The Frazer originals appearing in this essay are from the private collection of Dr. David Wisniewski.

- Page 41 "The Spell Of The Mahar"
- Page 42 "The Savage Attack Of The Sagoths"
- Page 44 "Tooth And Claw"
- Page 45 "Lord Of The Savage Jungle"
- Page 47 "Tarzan And The Castaways"
- Page 48 "The Kingdom Of The Mahar"

ROGUE'S CURSE

STORY, SCRIPT & ART BY WENDY PINI

HER SPIRIT DWELLS WITH HIM,
PURE EVIL. HIS PRISONER.



HE IS IMMORTAL...
AND LOVES HER.

WHAT
HAVE I
DONE
...?!

TO BE FREE, ALL
WE NEED DO...

GNNNNH!

...IS GET
WAN KILLED.

FOUR HUNDRED
YEARS LATER...

NOTHING
YOU CAN DO,
HAVE DONE
OR WILL
DO...

...WILL
CHANGE THIS
ONE TRUTH: I
WILL LOVE
YOU...



HOW LONG
HE GONNA NURSE
THAT SHINK? WHY
HE LOOKED IN
HERE...

...SHOULD
KNOCKED BACK
TEN BY NOW!

HEH
HEH!

YOU JUST
WARRA BEND OVER
HIS TABLE AGAIN,
DONTCHA BULLDIT?



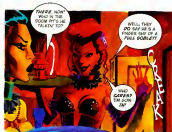
"GASSEL"
DAMN SIGHT
PRETTIER IN
THE PLEGA,
IN ME?

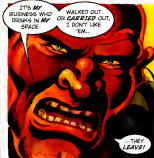
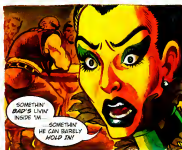


THEY LIEST
AS YOU ARE MY
CREATOR, RAYEK,
I'M FLATTERED

YOU COULD
GRANT THEM A NIGHT
TO SPOZE THEM FOR
ALL THEIR REMAINING
NIGHTS.

WHICH WOULD
BE FEW, INDEED,
WITH YOU AS OUR
FOURTH BERMATE,
BELOVED.







WELL WELL!
A GIFTED HUMAN
SHE SEES!

WHO YOU
CALLIN' "INFERIOR,"
FREAK?

THIS IS
MY GODDAM
WATERING
HOLE!

RATTLES YOU
A BIT, DOES IT, TO
BE PEGGED SO BY
AN "INFERIOR"?

I WAS NOT
ADDRESSING YOU.
LEAVE ME IN
PEACE...

...PLEASE.



"PLEASE..."
HOW SWEET!
TRYING TO PROTECT
THE BUFFOON?

YOU KNOW
YOU CANNOT.
HE IS FAR TOO
TEMPTING A
PLAYTHING...

...AND
I WISH TO
INDULGE IN
A LITTLE
SPORT!

NO...!



RESIST ALL
YOU WILL, BUT
YOU EXIST AT
THE MERCY OF
TIME...

...WHILE I
DWELL OUTSIDE IT
AND CAN NEVER TIRE!
I SHALL WIN,
RAYEK.

EITHER
YOU'LL AMUSE
ME BY KILLING HIM...
...OR I'LL LET
HIM DESTROY YOU,
AND THUS GET
MYSELF FREE!



SHUT UP,
YOU VICIOUS,
MURDEROUS
VIPER!

NOT
"ADDRESSING"
ME, HUH?









"UNUSUAL WEARY UNTO DEATH! BUT I WILL NOT DIE --

-- AND LET YOU LOOSE TO SAVAGE HUMANITY UNCHECKED!

HA HA HA! HUMAN "KIND?" THERE?

SO... HEAVY...! CAN'T GET UP...! CAN'T... MOVE!



BLOODY CONJURER! MONSTER! IT'S... YOU!

YOU'VE GOT ME... UNDER SOME CURSED SPELL!

AND THIS IS WHAT YOU WOULD DEFEND?



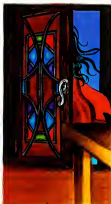
THE BRUTE IS TO OBLIVIOUS TO LIVE!

ON... THROAT...

PLEASE...

PLEASE DON'T...





WHAT PRICE THE UNICORN?

THE STORYTELLER IS THE MOST POPULAR PERSON IN THE TAVERN. THEY SAY...BUT IN MY EXPERIENCE, THERE'S ALWAYS SOME YOUNG UPSTART WHO THINKS HE KNOWS BETTER!

YOU OLD PHONY!
THERE'S NO SUCH THING
AS UNICORNS!

THE KID'S
RIGHT...

THE OLD GUY
CAN'T BE
SERIOUS!

DRAGONS WOULD
HAVE EATEN THEM ALL
ANYWAY...

HONESTY! ARE YOU
CALLING A HUNK OF
BAMBLING—a KEEPER
OF THE BOOKS OF LIES
—A LIAR??

WELL, UH,
NOT EXACTLY.
I MEAN...

SCAM!

Story by Kevin Taddar • Art by Philip Fowler • Colored by Paul Mounts
Lettered by Vincent Strans • Edited by David Napotelle



GOODY BECAUSE WE
MAY BE DRUNKS AND
LECHERS, BUT WE'RE
NEVER LAZY!



AS A MATTER OF FACT,
I KNOW THAT UNICORNS
EXIST BECAUSE I'VE SEEN
ONE MYSELF. I MIGHT BE
PERSUADED TO TELL
THE TALE...



YEH? TELL US,
PORTINNO?

OO OH?

LET'S
HEAR IT!

AHH, BUT MY
MUG APPEARS
TO BE EMPTY!



SLOOSH

WELL THEN!
IT WAS IN MY YOUNGER
DAYS—NEVER MIND HOW
LONG AGO—WHEN I WAS
A BIT OF A ROGUE...

NOT THAT I BROKE
ANY LAWS, MIND YOU,
BUT SOMETIMES PEOPLE
LOST THINGS THAT QUITE
ACCIDENTALLY ENDED
UP IN MY POCKETS.

... THIS LED TO SOME
MISUNDERSTANDING
AS YOU CAN IMAGINE...

"IT WAS ONE SUCH MISUNDERSTANDING THAT PROMPTED ME TO SPEND SOME TIME AWAY FROM THE COMPLICATIONS OF CITY LIFE. THERE WAS THIS BLUNDER GOING AROUND AT THE TIME..."

THE FOREST PEACE, YOU SAY?

YEP. A RARE AND PRECIOUS JEWEL, PROPERTY OF AN OLD ELF WHO LIVES IN THE WOODS' HEART. THEY SAY HE'LL GIVE IT TO THE RIGHT PERSON, IF YOU CAN FIND HIM. BUT THOSE WOODS ARE DENSE, AND FULL OF CONFUSING TRAILS.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, OLD MAN. GETTING LOST IN THE WOODS KIND OF APPEALS TO ME RIGHT NOW.

"BY THE TIME I'D SPENT SEVERAL DAYS WANDERING AROUND THOSE WOODS --AND SEVERAL NIGHTS SLEEPING ON THE HARD GROUND-- THE IDEA NO LONGER SEEMED AS APPEALING."

"NOT THAT I MADE MUCH PROGRESS ON THAT FRONT. IT WAS SUCH A SMALL TRINKET. AFTER ALL, AND THAT HOGWORM HAD DEFINITELY OVERREACTED. IT WAS PUREST CONSCIENCE THAT I BUMPED AGAINST HIM ON THE STREET WHEN HE LOST IT."

"BESIDES, I HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING IT WAS A TRIAL HEEDLOOM."

"I DAYDREAMED ABOUT THE FOREST PEACE, AND THE OLD ELF, FIGURING OUT WAYS TO TALK THE SABLE OFF HIM. IF HE WAS AS OLD AS THEY SAID, HIS WITS COULDN'T BE THAT SHARP. BESIDES, IT WAS PRACTICALLY CRIMINAL TO KEEP A GEM LIKE THAT OUT HERE WHERE NO ONE ELSE COULD ADMIRE IT."

"YES, I'D DEFINITELY BE DOING HIM A FAVOR BY TAKING THE BURDEN OF CARING FOR IT OFF HIS HANDS."

"SO I KEPT WALKING. ONLY A LITTLE CONCERNED THAT I WAS NEVER GUIN' ABLE TO FIND THE EDGE OF THE FOREST AGAIN."

"NEVERTHELESS, THE TIME PASSED PLEASANTLY AND UNDISTURBEDLY -- UNTIL THE SEVENTH DAY OF MY TRAVELS."

"IT WAS HIGH NOON AND I COULD HEAR THE WELCOME SOUND OF WATER GURGLING UP AHEAD FROM A CLEARING I COULD JUST SPOT THROUGH THE LEAVES. I SAUGED IN THE SHADOWS AT ITS EDGE TO CATCH MY BREATH."



"THAT'S WHEN I SAW HER."

"SHE WAS THE MOST MAGNIFICENT CREATURE I HAD EVER SEEN, OR COULD EVER HOPE TO SEE."

"HER HORN SPARKLED LIKE A JEWELLED WAND! HER EYES WERE THE BLUE OF SAVANNAH STOLIN FROM A DRAGON'S HOARD AND WILDFLOWERS WERE TANGLED IN HER LONG, PLATINUM-COLORED MANE."



"THIS ENTIRE FORM WAS A MAGICAL COMBINATION OF POWER AND GRACE."



"I MUST HAVE MADE
SOME SMALL SOUND."



"THAT INDIGO EYE PEERED STRAIGHT AT ME
—STRAIGHT INTO MY SOUL."



"THEN, IN A SINGLE TREMENDOUS
SOUND, SHE CLEARED THE STREAM
AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE TREES."

"LET ME TELL YOU, I WAS
A LITTLE SHAKEN. IT'S NOT
EVERY DAY YOU SEE A MYTH
BECOME REAL."

"AND I COULD FEEL
THE UNICORN WATCHING
ME OVER THE NEXT
SEVERAL DAYS."

"I'D CATCH A FLASH OF WHITE
OUT OF THE CORNER OF MY
EYE, OR HEAR SOFT BREATHING.
I WASN'T SCARED, REALLY,
JUST... JUMPY."

"I TRIED HARDER TO FIND
MY WAY OUT OF THE FOREST
AFTER THAT, BUT WITH NO
BETTER LUCK."

"AFTER ALL, I HAD NO
WAY OF KNOWING WHAT
ELFE MIGHT BE HIDING
IN THIS FOREST. I FOUND
OUT A FEW NIGHTS LATER."

"I Woke in the middle of the night to the sounds of wolves baying. They sounded close. I reached for my crossbow as my eyes adjusted to the dim light reflected from a sliver crescent moon."

AHHWOOOOOOOOO

"Under normal circumstances, I would have headed as far away from that howling as possible."

"But nothing was normal that night."

"I had gone barely half a league when I saw them. She'd put up a fight—but they had her cornered."

"It seemed strange to me that an ordinary wolf pack could threaten a creature like her. Then I spotted the pack leader and I knew this was no ordinary group of wolves."



"I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF A BRAVE MAN, BUT I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE A BEAUTY LIKE HER HARMED."



"AS I SIGHTED ON THE LEADER, HOWEVER, I COULD SEE THE FIRES OF DEATH-GATE BURNING IN ITS EYES. I COULD FEEL THE ANGER AND HATRED, LIKE A PALPABLE FORCE."



"THAT MALEFI GLARE PROZE MY BLOOD AND TURNED MY MUSCLES TO WATER. I WAS HELPLESS, UNABLE TO MOVE A FINGER."



"THEN THEY ATTACKED."



"MY PARALYSIS LIFTED, AND I HAD A BARE INSTANT TO ACT BEFORE THAT MONSTER'S MINDING LEAPT ON ME."

"I SCRABBLED FRANTICALLY FOR MY KNIVES, MY HANDS SUDDENLY SLICK WITH BLOOD."



"THE DARK BREATH OF THE WOLVES WAS ALL AROUND ME. THEIR CLAWS AND TEETH TORE AT ME, STRAINING FOR A DEATH GRIP."



"SUDDENLY, THE ATTACK STOPPED."



"SOMEHOW THE UNICORN, HER SILVER MANE FLASHING LIKE LIGHTNING, HAD SAVED ME."

"LOOKING BACK I SAW WHY. IT WAS A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME SHOT, BUT I WASN'T GOING TO HAVE TIME TO APPRECIATE IT."



"AS MY VISION DIMMED, I SAW THE UNICORN AGAIN, CLOSER THIS TIME. HIS HEAD BOWED... AS IF IN MOURNING."

"THERE WAS A FLASH OF BRILLIANT WHITE-HOT RAIN, AS IF MOLTEN SILVER STRAILED MY FLUSH, THEN EVERYTHING WENT BLACK."



"I AWOKE AT DAWN, ACHING ALL OVER, BUT MY BODY SHOWED ONLY FAINT SCARS WHERE ONCE HAD BEEN FATAL WOUNDS. AND TO MY SURPRISE, THE UNICORN WAS STILL THERE."

"SHE GAZED SERENELY AT ME, TOOK A COUPLE OF STEPS AWAY, THEN STOPPED AND LOOKED BACK OVER HER SHOULDER."

"I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO TURN DOWN THE INVITATION OF A BEAUTIFUL LADY, EVEN WHEN SHE HADN'T SAVED MY LIFE. SO I FOLLOWED."

"BY MIDDAY, WE REACHED HER DESTINATION."

CHRISTMAS: GOOD ELF! I AM PORTIFER, I APOLOGIZE FOR THE INTERRUPTION, BUT I HAVE BEEN LOST IN YOUR WOODS FOR MANY DAYS... UNTIL THIS GRACIOUS LADY LED ME HERE.

THEN YOU ARE INDEED A MOST FORTUNATE TRAVELER.

I RECEIVE FEW VISITORS THESE DAYS... BY CHOICE. I'M SURPRISED YOU WERE ALLOWED TO FIND ME.

MAY I ASK YOUR INTENTIONS?

I ORIGINALLY HAD HOPES OF TAKING THAT SHAM FROM YOUR STAFF, BUT I'LL BE HAPPY TO LEAVE THIS FOREST WITH MY LIFE NOW--THANKS TO MY GRACIOUS COMPANION. I BELIEVE SHE'S YOURS.

NOT MINE, EXACTLY. BUT WE DO KNOW EACH OTHER. IF SHE LED YOU HERE, THEN PERHAPS YOU SHOULD LEAVE HER WITH A VERY PRECIOUS JEWEL.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, PEARL? DO YOU WANT TO GO WITH HIM?



AND SO WE
LEFT THE FOREST
TOGETHER.

THAT'S IT
AND GOOD
NIGHT

SO MANY QUESTIONS!
I'D BE HERE A FORTNIGHT
SURVEILLING THEM ALL. AND A
GOOD STORYTELLER KNOWS
WHEN TO LEAVE HIS AUDIENCE
WANTING MORE. IF I TOLD YOU
EVERYTHING, YOU'D NEVER
INVITE ME BACK!

WHAT
DO YOU MEAN,
THAT'S IT?

WHO WAS
THE OLD ELF? WHAT
WAS THAT WOLF-THING?
AND WHAT HAPPENED TO
THE UNICORN?

YOU CAN'T
JUST LEAVE IT
AT THAT!



BECAUSE YOU MUST.
I WILL SAY THIS: AN EXPERIENCE
LIKE THE ONE I HAVE DESCRIBED
CHANGES A MAN. WHY, IT COULD
DRIVE HIM TO DRINK, OR TO GET
RELIGION, OR TO SETTLE DOWN
FROM A LIFE OF ADVENTURE.

WOULDN'T YOU
AGREE, PEARL?



ABSOLUTELY!



HA
HA HA HA HA!
HA!

END

PRIDELANDS

- RIVAL TRIBES -

PART ONE
"BLOODLINE"

SOME OTHER TIME AND PLACE...
ANOTHER UNIVERSE...
ANOTHER PLANET...
ANOTHER RACE...

SAVE TIMELESS STRUGGLE...
CONFLICT.

ALL LIFE IS CONCERNED IN THE
EYE OF OPPOSITION AND CHAOS...
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST...
NATURAL SELECTION...

THE PLANET KAI HAS ENTERED
THE EMBRYONIC STAGE:
A PRIMAL WORLD OF ENDLESS CHANGE...
EVOLUTION IN FLUX.

AS THE BIRTH OF THIS NEW AGE AWAITS
ITS FIRST AND FATEFUL BREATH,
THE WARS OF PRESERVATION ARE WAGED...
LIKE CONTRACTIONS BUILDING
BEFORE THE FINAL PUSH...
PAINFUL, AND IRREVERSIBLE...

IT IS NOT A TIME OF ORDER...
FOR THERE NEVER IS, SUCH A TIME.

ALTHOUGH, SOME MAY STRIVE TO MAKE IT SO...

ART BY:
DAREN BADER

STORY BY:
LANCE HUTTO

CREATED BY:
**DAREN BADER
LANCE HUTTO**

BALANCE IS THE KEY...
HARMONY RESIDING IN
THE FOOD CHAIN... A
DELICATE AND EASILY
DISRUPTED SYSTEM



PREDATORS THAT FORGE INTO FOREIGN
TERRITORIES IN SEARCH OF FOOD, CAN
UPSET THE NATURAL FLOW AND TILT
THESE CRUCIAL SCALES



SUCH EVENTS MAY INSIGHT
CONFLICT THAT DID NOT
PREVIOUSLY EXIST, POSSIBLY
FORCING SPECIES INTO
COMPETITION...



...PURELY TO
SURVIVE





THE REACTION TO AN INTRUSION
OF THIS TYPE MAY BE VIOLENT...

Splash

Splash

Splash



ESPECIALLY WHEN THE
STAKES ARE STACKED
SO HIGH...

Ke-Splash

FOR THE ULTIMATE
PENALTY HERE IS
EXTINCTION.



THE WANTAKORE RACE
CONSISTS OF FIVE UNITED
TRIBES, AND TOGETHER THEY
RULE THIS PLANET.

LED BY LORD FAUGUA
(QUATACHE TRIBE), THE
FIVE LEADERS EACH HAVE A
SPECIFIC ROLE AND TOGETHER
THEY FORM THE GOVERNING
COUNCIL.

THIS IS THE
EVE OF THE
STANCE...

I HAVE
CALLED ON YOU
TO SPEAK PRIVATELY
BEFORE THE
CEREMONY.

YOU ARE
MY ADVISERS,
AND ADMIRERS BY
THE PRIDE.

RYTONA,
OF THE SHAUNEN
TRIBE, ARE YOU
PREPARED TO
RULE IF
CHOSEN?

I WELCOME
RULE OF THE PRIDE
LORD FAUGUA, BUT THERE
ARE SIGNS OF PERIL
THIS EVE.

THE STARS
ARE DIM AND
THE MOON QUITE
BITTER...

I FEAR
THAT THE SPIRITS
WILL NOT BLESS
THE STANCE, MY LORD.

I WILL
GIVE YOUR
CONCERN IT'S DUE
CONSIDERATION.

SHAGNA,
OF THE TARAH
TRIBE?

LORD FAUGUA,
I AM EAGER TO
COMPETE, AND
READY TO LEAD
THE PRIDE,
BUT...

MY CONCERN
IS THE FOOD
SUPPLY...

THE
HERDS ARE
MIGRATING.

SHAGNA
LEADER OF
THE TIDDI?

PREPARED
FOR ANYTHING,
AND EAGER TO
RULE MY LORD.

I THINK
THAT WE'LL
SURVIVE!



THE
FOOD IS
THERE...

IF YOU
CARE TO
HUNT IT!

ENTER NIATAN, OF
THE RAKKA TRIBE.

SAY WHAT
YOU MEAN!
NIATAN!

ALL THAT
I MEAN TO SAY,
SWAGWA...

IS THAT
I AM FIT TO
RULE, FOR I
PROVIDE!

WHILE YOU
MERELY SEND TO
THE WOMEN AND CHILD
RATHER THAN THEIR
NEEDS.

SO,
FEED THE
TRIBE MY
KILL!



I'LL TEND
TO YOUR KILL
HERE AND
NOW!

NIATAN!



YOU WILL BE
BANISHED FOR
BLOODSHED!

SAVE IT
FOR THE
STANCE!

NIATAN,
IT IS YOUR
KILL!
YOU
FEED THE
TRIBE.



WE SHALL
SEE WHO IS
FIT TO RULE,
NIATAN!



SHABWA!
YOU KNOW
THE LAW!

COME MY
BROTHERS,
LET US
FEED...


FOR
TONIGHT
I CALL ON
EACH TRIBE TO
CELEBRATE...

TOMORROW
WE WELCOME A
NEW ERA... A
NEW LEADER...

THE LUNAR
ALIGNMENT,
AND... THE
STANCE!



DRAWN IN BY THE COMMOION,
OR PERHAPS THE SMELL OF FOOD...



MANY CREATURES WATCH FROM THE SAFETY
OF THE SHADOWS, BUT ONE PARTICULAR
SPECIES SHOWS MORE INTEREST THAN
PURE HUNGER ALONE.



SENSING MOVEMENT BETTER THAN DETAIL
IN THE LIGHT, THE ANIMAL WATCHES QUIETLY...



MOTIONLESS IN ITS OBSERVATION...




WITH THE MOST PRIMITIVE OF DIALECTS,
THE TAROSNA COMMUNICATE ALMOST INTUITIVELY,
INTERPRETING MERE GESTURES AND EXPRESSIONS...



INTENTIONS KNOWN,
WITHOUT SPEAKING.



THE TABOGNAI MAY REACH
SPEEDS OF UP TO THIRTY
MILES PER HOUR ON LAND.



THEIR INCREDIBLY STRONG
HIND-LEGS CAN PROPEL THEM SOME
TWENTY-FIVE FEET INTO THE AIR.

BUT THE TABOGNAI IS NEVER
MORE IMPRESSIVE TO WATCH...

THAN WHEN IT IS
TRULY AT HOME...



IN THE WATER!



THE ANIMAL INHALES
LUNGS FILL WITH WATER
AS GILLS GASP OPEN...

AFTER THE FIRST PAINFUL
BREATH, THE SMALL SET OF
LUNGS ADAPTED FOR LIFE
ON LAND FILL WITH WATER



ALLOWING THE ANIMAL
TO LOSE IT'S BUOYANCY...

SWIMMING TO THE OCEANS
DEPTH'S FREE OF DANGERS
FROM INTERNAL RUPTURING



THE TAPOSNA BECOMES
MORE AGILE IN THE WATER



A SPECIES FULLY SUITED
FOR IT'S TRUE ENVIRONMENT



CIVILIZED,
MANNERED,
HEEDING ORDER
AND RULE. WE
ARE A TRIBE OF
INTELLECT...

THIS
SEPARATES
US FROM
ANIMALS;
MINDLESS
BEASTS.

I
GROW
OLD AND
WEARY...

I MUST
NOW TRUST
THE FATE OF
OUR KIND IN
ANOTHER'S
HANDS.

HAVE I
SERVED THEM
WELL IN MY
TIMES?

HAVE I
TAUGHT THEM
THE WAY THAT
THE ELDER'S
HAD TAUGHT
ME?

IT
HAS BEEN
SAID...

"FORTUNATE,
IS ONE WHO'S
EARS HAVE HEARD
WISDOM WHEN IT
HAS BEEN
SPOKEN."



WE ACT
BASED ON
REASON, OUT OF
DREDDENCE TO LAW,
THE PRACTICE OF
DEMOCRACY.



AND
NOW, I MUST
SPEAK IT.



MY BROTHERS...
TOMORROW I WILL
ASK YOU TO CHOOSE
ONE WARRIOR FROM
EACH TRIBE...

THE WHO
YOU DEEM
WORTHY TO
LEAD
YOU...

HE MUST
BE STRONG,
WISE, AND LED
BY THE BEST OF
INTENTIONS IN
ORDER TO
RULE.



EACH WHO
CHOOSE TO COMPETE
WILL BE JUDGED ON
THEIR INTELLECT,
INTEGRITY AND
LEADERSHIP

THE STANCE
IS AT HAND
TOMORROW.

THIS ALIGNMENT
OF THE PLANETS COMES
BUT ONCE EVERY THIRD
SPRING, AND I HAVE
SERVED YOU FOR
THE PAST THREE
CELEBRATIONS...

TOMORROW
I WILL NO
LONGER
BE YOUR
RULER...

I WILL
BE ONE OF
THE TRIBE,
AS YOU.

AND ONE
OF YOU WHO
STANDS BEFORE
ME WILL TAKE
MY PLACE AND
LEAD US...

IT IS A
TIME OF GREAT
BEGINNINGS...

GIVE
YOUR ATTENTION
TO RYTANA, AS HE
OPENS OUR CEREMONY
WITH A FORETELLING
OF TOMORROW'S
UNION.







JOIN ME IN
THE ANCIENT
PRAYER...

AND LET
US SHARE THE
VISION...

GODS
PLEASE TELL OF
TOMORROW

BAUG
TOMACHE'
SHAUNTA
SIAN...

BAUG
TOMACHE'

BAUG
TOMACHE'
SHAUNTA
SIAN...

BAUG
TOMACHE'
SHAUNTA
SIAN...

BAUG
TOMACHE'
SHAUNTA
SIAN...

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SHAUNTA
SIAN...



BAUG
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SHAUNTA
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BAUG
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SHAUNTA
SIAN...

BAUG
TOMACHE'
SHAUNTA
SIAN...

BAUG
TOMACHE'
SHAUNTA
SIAN...



THE VISION
FADES...

I
FEAR THE
WORST...

IF WE ARE
TO CONQUER,
FEAR IS NO
OPTION!

A
DECISION
MUST BE
MADE...

PRESERVE
THE
BLOODLINE... OR
FIGHT!

WAR IT
SEEMS IS
OUR FATE...

THE GODS
HAVE GIVEN
US THEIR
WARNING...

NEXT ISSUE!
THE CONCLUSION

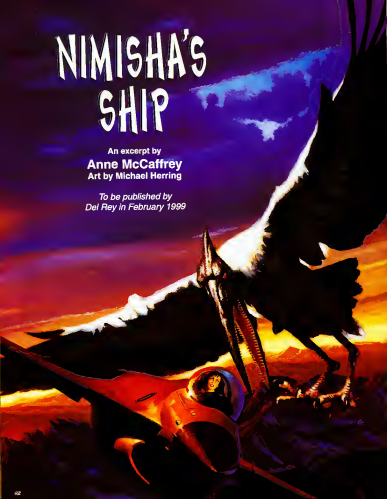
NIMISHA'S SHIP

An excerpt by

Anne McCaffrey

Art by Michael Herring

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One second she was crouching, the next, some subtle instinct had her on her feet and running to the bridge, waving with the erratic motion of a ship gone unstable and yelling "Report" at the top of her voice.

"Instruments indicate emergence of wormhole."

"There isn't a wormhole in this sector."

"Ship's library confirms wormhole phenomenon."

She caught sight of the bodiless white point of disturbance that could be nothing other than a wormhole plugging open the space directly in front of her.

"Helm to starboard! Hard!"

If they were lucky, they might just slip under the edge of the yawning maw that seemed to be sucking the ship in. From this angle, the hole looked far larger than it might actually be, for all it wasn't supposed to exist in three paracausal coordinates in Delta Quadrant. She'd chosen this area, off main shipping routes, as the could let out the Fleet's engines without running any other vessel down. The sensory meters of her ship were no more than a splinter at its perimeter, yet the might just be able to claim part.

Fighting against the bucking of the deck beneath her feet, she pushed herself into the pilot's chair, fingers flying to programs and release a maddening beacon, propelling it well astern of her ship. With her left arm, she fumbled into the safety harness but had no time to fasten the belt when the ship juddered and inexorably yawed to port, unable to cancel the starboard maneuver though she could hear both rheumy and engines roaring to comply. The wormhole had got her and the ship was slipping over its thick lip and down into its brilliant, rolling interior of the tunnel it made. A maelstrom to witness? She clung to the right armrest, struggling to secure herself in the harness.

"We are in the wormhole, ma'am," said the AI. "What procedures are recommended?"

Nimsha swallowed a totally inappropriate and useless expletive.

"Star down the drive. Use thrusters to keep us as steady as possible, Helm," she replied, firmly quelling the fight she could not quite suppress. To her immense chagrin, the AI told her she had forgotten to program wormhole protocol. Now, in the incredible pull of the hole, it was too late. Furthermore, she'd never been in one. Stable wormholes were relatively uncommon, and no one in their right mind entered one that hadn't been thoroughly probed.

Was the passage through a hole supposed to be this rough? If Helm's reflexes hadn't been knee-second fast, she'd be smashed against the sides, the hull scented if not permeated by the probabilities that the raw noise is retinal after-images they passed by so fast. Penalties was considered the best possible material to clad spacecraft and she had used the most advanced composition for the Fleet, but it could be dented and scraped. She could lose the exterior modules and sensors. Was she being sucked into a one-way route to nowhere? Still struggling to fit the harness about her for whatever protection that would afford her, she leaned to port to get her right arm through the straps, as a vague downward plumb brought her forehead against the armor with sufficient force to render her unconscious.

"Ma'am? Ma'am?" the calm voice of her pilot asked, "your vital signs are showing distress. You should report immediately to the infirmary." When there was no reply, the advice was repeated with an additional query. "Orders are required. No preprogrammed orders conform to the current emergency. Orders are requested, Ma'am?" Then, as the wormhole indeed spit them out into outer space, Helm added, "Without formal orders, will comply with standard operating procedures."

"Ma'am? Ma'am?"

"Lady Nimsha? Please answer, Lady Nimsha. Do you wish more to eat?"

"Nim, get to your feet and get over to the arm. I

can't treat you from here."

The sentence, such in a different but recognizable tone from pulsing attention to anxiety to command, gradually penetrated Nim's fogged mind.

She struggled to sit up, rolling her eyes at the pain in her head, trying to remember what had hit her.

"Orders, please, ma'am. I am on standby."

"Standby?" Nim appeared and forced her eyes open, one hand at her temple so that she felt the dried blood that had congealed there. "OH." She shed the bulk of harness she had managed to get on and tried to stand. "Helm, report!"

She made a second and successful attempt to get to her feet and made her way to the medical station. Wove her way, she amended. She'd had quite a crash.

"Doc, how long have I been unconscious?"

"Three hours, twenty minutes, six seconds and."

"Thank you, Helm," she cut off the handsodds. "I asked the Doc."

"Helm needs to hear your voice, Nim," the medical aid in Lord Naves' soothing baritone.

"Now lie down before you fall."

The charge in position made her head throb, but the infirmary unit's cottons had soaked out of their niches to clump on her body for restings.

"Shaken but nothing stirred," the Doc said reassuringly. "We'll just relieve the symptoms and clean up that cat. A sport of muck-in will close it neatly."

Nim grimaced as a wash made her aware of how tender the spot was but the sudden coolness on her arm from a hypodermic meant that the discomfort would soon disappear.

"All systems functioning normally," Helm said. "No damage reported in any sector despite the turbulence of the wormhole. The hull has been scraped on both sides but has not lost integrity."

"Wormhole?" Nimsha would have shot straight if she hadn't been entangled with coverables, which were still checking her over.

"Let's just keep our cool," Doc said.

"We were down into a wormhole, ma'am, and you were rendered unconscious by the buffeting," was Helm's contribution.

Somehow she got the distinct impression from Helm's voice that it was her petty human fault that she was vulnerable and he was wiser for her. Hmmmm...maybe she should a program Helm when she got back to the yard. That area had embarked on the script with some emotional content she was not to her liking. Damn him.

"What is our position?"

There was a long pause, during which she was given another injection for shock, the Doc said.

"I'm waiting, Helm."

"Working, ma'am, on establishing our present position with our identification program." Helm was almost a synonym for the functions handled by that AI. It was not only guidance, but engineering, communications, navigation and science, as well as intermediary for all the supplies on board the Fleet which was not for human consumption. And it indeed chose in from the lots supplied by Caret.

Nim craned her neck to get a glimpse of the main screen.

"You'll have time enough to look at it when you've been cleaned by me, Nim, and have had something to bring your blood sugar up to normal. Caret, prepare a sweetened and restorative drink, high protein, full trace elements."

"Yes, indeed. My pleasure."

Nimsha wondered if she actually heard a note of relief in Caret's voice. The AI was not programmed to mislead, as Helix and Doc were.

The manipulative arts of the infirmity withdrew. "Move slowly now," Doc advised. "No permanent damage but you gave yourself quite a crack."

"I'll have to see to the nearest design. Had it better," Nimsha murmured. "Take note please, Helin," she added as she walked slowly toward the dispenser and the cup of security liquid waiting her. Judiciously sampling it, though it was at just the right temperature to be ingested immediately, she thanked Cater and sat a fervent "Yotic very welcome, Lady Nimsha," as she returned to the pilot console.

"It shouldn't take you this long to match spectro-analysis, Helin. What's the problem?"

"I can find no matches, ma'am."

Nimsha blinked. "You're programmed with every single data cube available to the Fleet on every single star system. You mean, that wormhole took it outside the Delta Quadrant?"

"That would be a correct assessment of an inability to identify any of the primaries visible. We are substantially closer to the Magellanic Clouds, so we must be nearer the southern celestial pole. I believe I can identify the constellations Doradus, but it is the only distant escape."

Nimsha looked out, not precariously doubting Helin but unwilling to concede that she, and her ship, were lost in space. She knew what configuration of stars she should have seen from the Fleet at the position where the wormhole sucked her in. There were no comfortably familiar star-patterns visible, but she was still in a populous area to judge by the multitude of primaries shining all around her.

"Well, if my brains were scrambled, at least you can't be, Helin."

"No, ma'am."

"What about that double star? Surely it's unusual enough to have turned up somewhere on Fleet explorations?"

"It does not match within the necessary parameters for any double stars on file."

Nimsha caught herself into the pilot's chair and sipped at her beverage. It had a minty flavor and something else, more exotic, but she could feel its restorative touch.

"Intriguing," she said, watching a note her mother would use when faced with some unusual situation.

"Shall I log it in?"

"Might as well. Do the whole panorama," Nimsha added with a sweep of her free arm. "Might be useful sometime. No answer to our mystery, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am."

At least Helin didn't sound worried. No, the wotzy was all hers.

"Helin, have we moved from where that wormhole spat us out?"

"No, ma'am. I awaited your orders."

"Yes, of course, since you weren't programmed for the standard operating procedure on exiting wormholes."

"No, ma'am."

For that matter, she didn't know what that would be either but she could wish he had less need for so many negatives. Had she been conscious, her first action on being spat out would have been to send a probe back through the hole with the present star pattern. However, she hadn't been awake and the cockpit fault Helin for not knowing what action to take in such a situation.

"Then, please prepare a new beacon, giving our registration and core-public configurations, the spectro-analysis of the stars in our spatial vicinity and report our request for contact with any fleet or civilian vessel."

"Aye, ma'am."

An affirmative was a nice change.

"Begon away," Helin and a few moments later

That was one advantage in having Alatus managing the ship. They didn't have to take breaks or eat or go to the head at awkward moments and they worked with great speed and efficiency. She sighed and drained the cup.

"That did the trick, Cater, Doc."

"I commend some rest, Nara, while you're awaiting a response."

"Aren't you the optimist?" She replied with a snort. But the idea of getting horizontal and sleeping was a good one. She'd be able to think better when the headache, as well as the medication that had reduced it, was gone. "You have the coin, Helin."

"I have the coin, ma'am."

She slept her normal six hours and woke refreshed. After a quick shower in water which her purifying system kept fresh enough to allow such a luxury, she dressed and, leaving her quarters, gave Cater orders for her breakfast.

"Good morning, Helin. Any report?"

"Nothing to report, ma'am."

"Good morning, Doc."

"You sound perfectly normal," Doc said cheerfully.

"Thank you. And thank you, Cater, for breakfast."

She asked for music since she liked it in the background when she was thinking hard. Indeed, she had no idea at all of what to do next, apart from waiting beside the beacon, hoping its pulse would alert someone. Her meal finished, she resumed the pilot's chair, staring out at unfamiliar constellations. Why, that band of stars in the grouping to the upper right vaguely resembled Orion's belt, but the rest of the constellation did not match.

"Helin, has your inspection of the immediate vicinity turned up any M-type planets nearby?"

"Three, ma'am. A red light briefly curled the three primaries."

"That many?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, when I find myself twiddling my thumbs, we can always go take a look-see. Might as well. Action was preferable to sitting like-woman was it on her tuff?" "I'd give it another three days. That would give time for our ritual pulse to reach main shipping lanes."

"Or the corridors of this Quadrant," Doc added.

"A search of the records of ships missing in the general vicinity of that wormhole has proved fruitful," Helin suddenly volunteered.

"Oh?"

"Eighteen ships in the two hundred and fifty years of recorded space exploration."

"Oh!" She paused, smiling narrowly. "Make that nineteen, Helin, since we've just joined that chit group."

"Yes, ma'am."

"When was the last one reported to Fleet?" She held her breath for his reply.

"Fifteen years ago, Explosive Vessel FSPS 9K66Z, the Protoboy, was reported missing. Her last report came from this general area."

"Fifteen?" Well, she was not going to miss Cassia's Necklacing. Somehow she'd find a way home before that auspicious event in her daughter's life three and a half years from now.

Three days later there had been not so much as a peep from the pulse. As it had been sent out in all directions, she was obviously far from any responder, even those distant Fleet 'ies' that Caleb had told her dotted known space. However, that did not mean that there wouldn't be a response. Nimsha was not commotionously patient. She required action. If she'd been traveling to a destination, there would have been other matters to involve her. Flaring moonlines in space, even

though the programmed a day full of the various activities she had for diversion: exercise in the gymnasium, playing interactive games, and an immense library of vid- and tape- was not the same thing as having a destination.

She also spent time with Helen in gathering a file of spectro-analyses of all the prisoners in their present stasiscape. These were inserted into the beacon's data file.

"Helen!" she began firmly after her breakfast on the fourth morning. "How much does it take a pulse to get from one side of Delta Quadrant to the other?"

"Nine full ship days with the strength of the unit on board."

Slowly she came to the bridge and looked out at the uninformative and strange stasiscape.

"We shall remain in position then, to allow any searchers time to reach us," she said. "I shall make use of the suspended animation facility. Doc."

"Always ready to comply, Nima."

"Helen, you will receive my incoming pulses. You will have Doc serve me instantly you have received my response. If, however, the wormhole reappears." She paused, wondering if using due escape from her present position was sensible considering the erratic behavior of unprobed wormholes—you will immediately enter it, deploying a second beacon during the time of this egress. Doc, if Helen takes us into the wormhole, remove me."

"Is this advisable, Lady Nimsha?" Helen and Doc asked in chorus.

"I can't be more lost than I am now, can I?" she replied. "At least I can leave behind proof that I was here and am still very much alive."

"There are three prisoners with habitable planets, Lady Nimsha. Why not investigate the possibility of establishing a planetary base?" asked Helen.

"A good idea," she said, rubbing her chin thoughtfully as Helen red-circled the three prospects again. "But there is every possibility that the wormhole would return us to our starting point, and that would be the best solution."

"Shall you stay in suspended animation until that time?" Doc asked. "If there is no response to the pulse message?"

"A good point. Who knows when that wretched hole will reappear. All right, let's act a limit of a year to that day for removal if neither a message arrives nor the wormhole appears. I don't want to stay away any longer than necessary."

To herself she put the question: Which way would I have to go to get back home? Helen had registered no directional bend in which the wormhole had bended the space from there to here. Once again she thought how, if she had only been conscious when they reached the end of the wormhole, she could have launched a probe with her custom stasiscape back through the hole before it closed. Though what good that would have done was moot when there were no recognizable primaries at this exit point to guide a rescue party. Eventually, the beacon would guide in a rescue vessel. Eventually.

"No, of course not, Nima," Doc said, his tone approving. Helen approved the order.

"I am also to be roused if anything extraordinary should occur in our current spatial neighborhood."

"Anything not covered by standard operating procedures, no?"

"You got it, Helen."

Nimsha rose, walking with stiff legs to the infirmary unit. She didn't like this expedient but it was better than waiting around and firming herself over her inability to take action. She'd had several short spells of suspended animation and was none the worse for them. She did dislike not being present, but

she could trust Helen and Doc to rouse her if anything unwelcome happened.

"Whenever you're ready, Doc," she began but wouldn't note how much of the sentence in her mind she actually spoke aloud because the walls around the medical couch rose and strapped shut over her head, the sleep gas already hissing into the enclosed space.

"Lady Nimsha!" said a familiar voice as the fog of sleep lifted from her mind. The medical couch was open and not so much as a whiff of the sleep gas remained.

"A full standard year has passed, no?" she asked.

"And no response?"

"No, no?"

She felt the coolness of hypoglycemia penetrating both arms.

"Sit up slowly, Nima, but I think you'll find you're in excellent shape after that nice long nap," Doc said.

"May I fix you something to eat, Lady Nimsha?" Cancer asked.

Nimsha's stomach rumbled.

"Indeed you may," she said, following Doc's advice about movement. She was stiff with disuse. "Helen, plot a course to the nearest of the primaries with an M-type planet. I'm tired of hanging about in space. Let's see what mischief we can get into out there."

"I am programmed to remind you, Lady Nimsha," Helen said, sounding as close to repressive as the AI could get, "that we are conscientious to avoid contact with emerging species. It is against FSP policy to interfere with normal evolution when the indigenous population has reached either tool-making, or settled agricultural base level."

"That is, if there is an indigenous and apertur population," she said with a grin.

"Yes, no?" was Helen's not at all contrite response. Nimsha smiled as she collected the usual post-sleep liquid meal.

"This at least tastes appetizing, Cancer. Thanks," she said after the first tentative sip. The goal for the revised diet was offered on meal ships was so bland it was difficult to swallow. That was another of her little improvements for long-distance traveling; savory comestibles.

"And, Helen," she added, "leave an update on that beacon to indicate our new destination."

"Already programmed, no?"

She shrugged. She really was almost superfluous.

"Estimated arrival time?" she asked.

"At Interstellar Speed Three, we will reach the heliopause in two days."

"So be it, Helen. We will decelerate and record all data on our way into the third planet. It is the third planet, isn't it?"

"Yes, no?"

"Standard almost, isn't it?" she murmured.

"Yes, no?"

Nimsha made a facial gesture. Oh, well, you was more encouraging than another space of 'no's' from Helen.

She left the thrum through the deck plates as the Fiver roused forward, gradually increasing speed sufficient to enter IS-drive. She watched the stars in the view screen begin to blur, coarsened down to herself to the translation into the IS speed mode, and braided herself just as the Fiver did forward. She had become inured to the invasion music, was still pleased when it passed as they entered into warp drive.

"Report on mannan and performance, please?" After all that was still a mild pun.

"All systems functioning at normal levels and efficiency."

That was certainly as it should be.

She opened her log and made the necessary entry. Helm would have kept the ship's log updated on a daily basis she would have to update hers.

The fact that she now had a destination made all the difference to her morale. She felt alive, keen, wondering just what that world would be like. Of course, if there were any signs of civilization, she'd have to vent off. She could almost wish there were a society of some sort to visit. As the first Emergency of Federated Science Planes.

Damn. Had she put onboard the universal translator? Yes, she must have. She remembered having Hika (in all the time). The woman had given her a shocked and surprised look. But she'd done it.

"Helm, is the universal translator activated?"

"Yes, ma'am. Shall I put it online?"

"No, but I'm glad it's there."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Always prepared for the unexpected, aren't you, Nami?"

She gave an ironic laugh. "Except for a wormhole."

Doc. "Well, yes, but you had cleared your course with the Fleet, and they had no records of a phenomenon in that sector, had they?"

"No, they didn't. It's mostly used for their navy maneuvers and testing since it's rather barren of stars and planets."

"Is that so?"

"It is."

She was certain that there had been intensive searches for her, while she had slept. Caleb Raine, not to mention her mother and Carra, would never give up until they either heard the ship's distress call or found her. That was comforting, but she did want to make it back before Carra was Necklaced. She looked forward to that day, she'd be able to take her daughter more fully into her confidence and to examine Carra's natural aptitudes. No reason for the girl to be one of those glided-or-mishapen-for-fashion-dilemmas. Useless creatures. Her mother might have been traditional in every aspect of social behavior and a devil for propriety, but she had never been stupid, stupid, or shallow. Roudymense women had always been achievers.

The system, which Namiha whimsically named Primus, adding its coordinates within the present sphere of the galaxy, was so close to "normal" that it was exactly what its exploration team would give all left arms to encourage. There were ten planets, the coldest, outermost, fourth in from another giant, and while there was no interest left between the gas planets and the fourth, the third was in the proper astro-physical position for being close enough to an primary to be habitable. It had three moons, the largest further out, with two more ones seeming to chase each other. Most wick havoc with the tidal system. She decided to call the third planet Felwyn, partly after an old dystopic novel she'd once read and partly because it was "nowhere" backwards and that certainly was her present situation. She hovered by the large moon to do the usual basic investigative work, sending down an exploratory probe and waiting for its report.

No holes in the ozone layer, the usual useful mix of atmospheric gases, sufficient sea, and nine continents, three with archipelagos reaching out, the broken fingers to the larger land masses. Helm, in the AF's science office capsule, agreed that the planet looked to be eminently habitable.

"Let's orbit and see what else we can discover," Namiha said, toggling the log to include that order. She'd had the usual space master's briefing from FSI about not inflicting indigenous sapients with too abrupt a contact with a space-faring race and what to do if by any remote chance the met other space-farers. So far the universe seemed very full of sentient species incapable of ever attaining that freedom.

"Shorter day, I see," Namiha mentioned as they completed one orbit. "And no sign of what we tend to term 'civilization' either."

"No, ma'am," Helm replied. "No artificial satellites. No pulses, no solar or radio transmissions. Not even radars."

"Let's go in," she said.

The ship continued to inward spiral, quiescent the planet's surface as it went.

Daylight shone on a land seeming with small and large life forms, jungles, forests, plains, and mountain ranges of considerable height and depth running the twisted spires suggesting their savage upthrust from basement rock materials. The night-side did not show any fires or the use of fossil fuels. The planet did have one deposits that would certainly interest developers back in her native portion of the galaxy. That is, if they could establish that there were no sentient inhabitants. Further circling brought her over portions of the continents, Helm mindlessly mapping through Namiha had turned off that access. She used viewing the surface at high magnification to be able to make out details, but it gave her a headache to see surface features spreading by that quickly. So she reduced the magnification and trusted Helm to call her attention to any anomalies. On the fourth lap, Helm spoke.

"Someone used an unusual metallic mass on the plateau directly ahead."

Namiha turned up the magnification but they were too far out to determine what the anomaly was, other than something that perhaps ought not to be there.

"Mark it, Helm. Definitely needs to be seen."

On the seventh lap, another anomaly was discovered. "Now that's ridiculous. We haven't seen so much as a band of humanoid methods but those two metallic blips are not indigenous to this planet. I'll bet my Necklace on it."

"Rush of you, dear Nami," Doc said with a palpable apple in his voice.

"See, know me, Doc," she agreed.

"Let's home in on the first anomaly, Helm. I think we've ascertained that this indigenous population are mainly beasts, unlikely to be evolutionarily compromised by our presence."

"There is a third invisible anomaly, ma'am, and I am now sending a fourth."

"We'll have a dozen at those, too."

It was out of the bounds of possibility that all eighteen missing ships had landed on Unknown, though that would have been a logical course of action, given its vagabondy for humans. This could be rather a fun adventure. Of course, the downside was that if they all had been stuck here since they were still lost as missing, then the war, too. Well, maybe some other marooned male would be possible. Lady Rezalla would be fun even when she learned of her daughter making any sort of an improper alliance. But culture life was not a prospect Namiha could contemplate with any joy.